



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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## **Local farms, school districts team up for Taste Washington Day** ***Washington-grown produce, foods to be featured in many school lunches September 29***

**OLYMPIA** – On Sept. 29, students in many schools around the state will be able to enjoy some of Washington’s bounty of fruits, vegetables, grains and meats. On that day, more than 60 schools and 50 farms will participate in *Taste Washington Day* to celebrate the state’s agricultural diversity and encourage healthy eating habits.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Farm-to-School Program and the Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA) are partnering with local schools to feature Washington-grown foods in their school meals. It’s also an opportunity for school communities to consider where their food comes from, how it is produced and the benefits of a healthy diet.

“Schools from Bellingham to Sunnyside to Freeman in the Spokane area are participating by partnering with farmers to serve the freshest foods available during the fall harvest,” said Tricia Kovacs, manager of WSDA’s Farm-to-School Program. “We’ve had a great response and we want to encourage more farms and schools to participate,” Kovacs added. Kovacs can be reached at (206) 256-6150 or [tkovacs@agr.wa.gov](mailto:tkovacs@agr.wa.gov).

“The more we expose kids to fresh, seasonal foods, the more they choose those healthy foods,” said Lisa Johnson of the Washington School Nutrition Association. “It’s in keeping with the theme ‘Washington Grows on Washington Grown.’ We really need active partners—which could include parents, teachers and principals—all of those who can help encourage kids to try new foods.”

“Our goal is to feature seasonal Washington-grown foods throughout the school year, but *Taste Washington Day* helps us see the gains we’ve made to get local foods into lunches and snacks at schools,” Kovacs said. “Farm-to-School projects provide great benefits for the students, schools and farmers.”

The special menus on Sept. 29 will include items such as apples, cheeses, potatoes, green onions, broccoli, whole wheat breadsticks, and something that will surely please the students—a “Grown in Washington” fruit salad.

WSDA’s Farm-to-School Program was created by the state Legislature through the Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act of 2008. Staff works closely with the WSDA’s Small Farm & Direct Marketing Program, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State University’s Small Farms Team and other partners to facilitate and improve farm-to-school connections and local purchases of agricultural commodities.

More information on the program is available at [www.agr.wa.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.agr.wa.gov/farmtoschool).

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